



Scherer and shadow: Clifford Scherer, interim superintendent of the Farmington Schools, is shadowed by Harrison's Diane Zolton.

STAFF PHOTOS BY SHARON LEMMA

Students cast shadows, learn

BY LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER

For a day, the ink well is theirs. So, too are the lesson plans, the budgets and the concerned parents at board meetings.

Students Operating Schools is designed to give kids a chance to see what running a school district is like. Friday's program is the district's second.

Kids shadowed superintendents, board presidents and principals for a day. Later, they sat down to a mock board meeting to

tackle dress codes and censorship.

For many, it was an eye-opening experience. Farmington High senior John Cichoza worked with assistant superintendent for finance Bruce Barrett, the district's top number cruncher.

Would Cichoza like to manage the district's \$80 million plus budget someday?

"I don't know," Cichoza said. "It's an interesting job. It's a lot of responsibility though."

Farmington senior Laura McWilliam tagged along with Building and Student Services

director Don Cowan.

"Oh my gosh, I was just amazed because he has huge responsibilities," McWilliam said. "He's the head of every committee in Farmington I can think of. He makes a lot of decisions."

The mock board meeting produced an earnest debate over censorship. The discussion centered on a recent case involving the Farmington High student newspaper Blue and White.

A series on student sexuality was stopped from going to press. School officials said it violated state mandates regarding the

teaching of sex education. The series is being rewritten and will be published later.

Students discussed both pros and cons of the issue. Cowan portrayed a parent, which gave the debate more authenticity.

Administrators learn from the students, Cowan said.

"I think the elementary and central office officials, they really seemed to enjoy it and they got a sense of the modern-day teenager," Cowan said. "That's why we stopped at that topic (censorship) that creates that type of discussion."



Taking the tour: Board trustees Susan Lightner (left), Joe Spoke (right) and Helen Prutow (third from right) escort students Heather Stoneman and Jennifer Lossia, both of North Farmington, and Liz Momblanco of Farmington High on a tour.

Absentee voters make mark

The turnout for absentee voters concerning Proposal A is heavy so far in Farmington Hills and Farmington.

"We've had over 7,100 AVs so far, and we still have a week to go," said Farmington Hills city clerk Kathy Dornan. Farmington clerk/treasurer Patsy Cantrell said she expected about 600 ab-

sentee ballots and had received about 600 as of Tuesday.

Voters will decide the ballot question March 15. Those wanting absentee ballots can pick them up through Saturday at both city clerk offices. The Farmington Hills city clerk's office will be open from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday and the Farmington clerk's

office will be open from 8:30 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Voters can return the ballots through March 15, when polls will be open.

In addition, absentee voters can change their minds and recast their ballots up until election day, said Sue Rose of the Hills city clerk's office.

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which way to go. Another 30 percent indicated his views would affect their vote.

Bill McMaster, chairman of Southfield-based Taxpayers United, said he is disappointed Headlee is not taking a stand. However, McMaster doesn't think it affects Headlee's standing as a tax-cut crusader.

"We, frankly, talked to him about it," McMaster said. "We tried."

"I think we're guilty of overlooking the obvious. Dick Headlee doesn't need to take a position on A as long as he continues to support the governor's efforts — promised, not delivered — to cut property taxes by 20 percent."

A secretary at Alexander Hamilton said she has received several calls from people wanting to know how Headlee would vote.

Still, the namesake of the 1978 Headlee Tax Limitation amendment doesn't feel compelled to take a stand.

"No, I'm not going to," Headlee said. "I like the sales tax. I like uniformity; I don't like non-uniformity. It's a quandary."

"I feel a major responsibility to be cautious, and encourage people to really understand what's taking place."

My preference was to not mess with the constitution, but to carburetor-adjust the taxes: cigarette taxes, other taxes and to roll back property taxes.

Richard Headlee

The ballot plan (Proposal A) calls for a raise in the sales tax from 4 to 6 cents on the dollar. The backup plan calls for a 30-percent hike in the income tax.

The sales tax plan also calls for a 5 percent assessment cap and would lower the Farmington school homestead millage rate to 22.24 mills from 32.8 mills. A mill is \$1 of tax for \$1,000 of state equalized property value.

Critics say, though, the plans create non-uniform tax rates for homeowners and business property owners. Thus, it establishes separate classes of taxpayers.

The income tax plan would lower the Farmington school homestead millage rate to 20.42 mills. The tax rate for businesses and second homes would be 32.42 mills compared to 24 mills in the ballot plan.

"It (the income tax hike) is a rotten plan," Headlee said. "If Proposal A fails, obviously the backup plan is not a backup plan."

Headlee said he met with Engler recently. They had a two-hour meeting to discuss the plan that would fund public education.

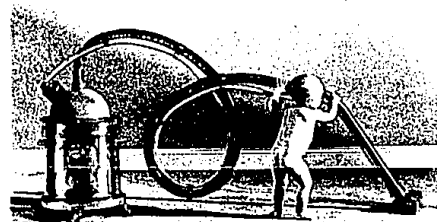
Some see Proposal A as a mandate for Engler's four years as governor with a November election approaching. A proposal to raise the sales tax last June was shut down by voters.

Had this not been an election year, Headlee said he would have been more likely to take a stand.

"My preference was to not mess with the constitution, but to carburetor-adjust the taxes: cigarette taxes, other taxes and to roll back property taxes," Headlee said. "In 1991, as you recall, my suggestion was to roll the assessments back 3 percent every year until you reached 40 (percent). I think we had a pretty well-balanced system at the time."

"This thing we have now introduces something I'm uncomfortable with. Yet I prefer the sales tax over the income tax. I think a sales tax is much better for job creation, much better for the economy."

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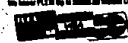
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LUCILE B. WALTERS
Mrs. Walters, 85, of Farmington died March 8.

Born in LaVergne, Tenn., Mrs. Walters was a homemaker. She was a graduate of Redford High

School. She belonged to several garden and bridge clubs.

Survivors include her husband, Harley; son, Gary; five grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren.

Services are today, March 10, at the Thayer-Rock Funeral Home at 1 p.m. The Rev. Edward Duncan of First United Methodist Church will officiate. Burial will be in Grand Lawn Cemetery, Detroit.

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